**IT Applications**

**Onscreen design elements, p 233**

Onscreen solutions need to be carefully designed to create user-friendly onscreen productions.

From pg 234 complete the following in relation to the design elements to consider.

1. Proportion
   1. What is meant by the hierarchy of a page?

Hierarchy refers to the importance of the information, that is, the more important information should have visual prominence, and the less important information less so.

* 1. What factors affect the visual hierarchy of a screen?

Headings, logos or links should be given visual prominence as these are most important to the usage of the site. Things that the company does not want to emphasise such as cost of items are lower in the hierarchy.

1. Orientation
   1. What does orientation refer to?

Orientation refers to direction and aspect of elements of an onscreen. An example of this is how the text is aligned and where the pictures and frames are placed with respect to the text, to give the page direction.

* 1. List some typical considerations for orientation of screen elements.

Typical considerations include the direction the logo is to face, whether or not a graphic should be flipped as a mirror image, whether the picture should be at the top bottom or side of the page, and how the text is aligned.

1. Clarity and consistency
   1. What does clarity refer to?

Clarity refers to how clearly the information on the screen is presented, and how well the user can distinguish between the different visual elements.

* 1. List characteristics of a clear screen.

The screen should not be crowded with objects and features, fonts and font size should be easy to read and the resolution of graphics must be great enough for a clear image.

* 1. What is meant by consistency?

Consistency refers to the use of similar or predictable features on the screen, so that the user can navigate without unnecessary confusion or error. Using a similar layout for pages makes it easier to understand where they are in the website, and how to navigate further.

* 1. List elements that can be used to support the consistency of an onscreen document.

Logos, headers and footers, search fields and navigation bars can all be placed consistently on the webpages to help the user understand the website. Maintaining the same font styles, size, and colour scheme also contribute to consistency.

1. Colour and contrast
   1. What are the conventions for onscreen colours.

The conventions are:

* Most easily read text colours are black and white
* Avoid using red and green together or blue and brown
* Limit the variety of colours
* Light or pastel shades are best for the back ground
* Blue is the standard for hyperlinks changing to purple after they have been visited.
  1. What is the role of whitespace in assisting the contrast in an onscreen product?

Whitespace can be used as a contrast to a chosen visual element to separate it from other elements and break up what would otherwise be a solid block of information. It reduces the crowdedness of the information presented on the screen and provides clarity and attractiveness.

**Characteristics of onscreen solutions: efficient and effective user interfaces, p 238**

1. What is the user interface?

The user interface is the point at which a user interacts with an information system. The elements of the interface include the screen, keypad and mouse, and software such as Windows or Mac OS.

In addition to the design elements already considered high quality user interfaces need to consider the following:

1. Usability and accessibility
   1. What is meant by usability?

The usability of an interface refers to how transparent it is – the user will not notice the interface itself but rather the applications they open. The user can then focus on the information they are looking for it rather than the way in which they found it.

* 1. List some factors that contribute to increased usability.

Some contributing factors include thorough planning, having a relatively simple screen layout without overdecorating, animation etc. Few buttons and icons to distract the user, a way to turn off hint boxes etc. Long or wide screens which require scrolling should also be avoided.

* 1. Which fonts are used for headings and body of document?

Serif fonts are best used for the body of a document and sans serif best for headings. The serifs, or tails, on the characters held prevent eye strain when reading blocks of information.

* 1. What is meant by accessibility?

Accessibility refers to how straightforward and easy the screen is to interact with, without major interruption of what they are trying to do. They should not need to puzzle over the meaning of a button, but instead use simple and familiar symbols. Help buttons and search fields help increase accessibility.

* 1. List examples of conventional navigation symbols.

Conventional navigational symbols include a question mark for a help icon, a house for the ‘home’ button, and forward and back arrows to navigate visited pages.

* 1. What other factors must interface designers consider?

Interface designers must also think about the target audience, and making the interface accessible to the widest possible range of viewers. This includes making the interface operable on a variety of systems, skill sets and possible disabilities such as colour blindness.

* 1. What are built in redundancies in an onscreen product?

Redundancies are multiple ways in which a user can perform the same action and get the same result. These include icons, drop down menus and keyboard shortcuts, etc. These are deliberately placed to make the interface more widely accessible.

1. Appropriateness and relevance.
   1. What characteristics must an onscreen product have to meet the needs of its audience?

To meet the needs of its audience, the onscreen product must present the information in a usable and timely manner, be a streamlined and functional but attractive screen, and generally show efficiency and effectiveness rather than show off a ‘bag of tricks’.

* 1. List items to avoid.

The products should avoid unnecessary distractions, overcomplicated details and clutter, and highly technical jargon.

**Characteristics of onscreen solutions: Characteristics of effective information architecture.**

1. What does information architecture refer to?

Information architecture of an onscreen solution refers to the way the information is structured and the ways it can be navigated by the user. There are layers of information which the user can access with search queries and hyperlinks.